

Teach Them Diligently to Your Children

by Nathaniel Brock

These words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

To parents and teachers these words from Deuteronomy can be both inspiring and daunting. Clearly the Lord is charging us with more than quickly mumbling the prayer with our children after along, busy day. Secular humanism, materialism, and consumerism loudly blare their agendas in today's world. Making room for our children to hear the Lord's still, small voice can seem like one more item on a massive "to do" list. But what could be more important than guiding the children the Lord has entrusted to our care toward spiritual preparation for life in this world and eternity in heaven?

A prominent New Church educator was once asked why he chose to teach at the Academy of the New Church when the pay elsewhere would have been far better. His response was that it was the easiest place for him to teach. I feel the same way about my work. It's not just the excellent teacher-to-student ratio and the wonderful resources that support our instruction that make the work easy. Nor do I look on the enormous task of opening the way for the Lord to fill our children's spirits as easy. But, here, I have the freedom to lay before my students the most precious teachings from the Lord's Word without embarrassment, censor or fear for my position. This freedom, allowing New Church teachers to communicate with their students about the most important things in life without constraint, does make our work easier than it would be elsewhere.

From the start of my involvement with New Church education, I heard that it should be an extension of the home. In many respects I am only now, in my ninth year of teaching, and with four children of my own, realizing what this means. I have come to see what a gift it is to teach children whose parents have conveyed to them a love of the Lord. I learn a great deal from students through our discussions and interactions and realize that their thoughts and ideals closely reflect the nurturing they receive at home. For this I am very grateful. This spiritual guidance from home is the starting point and sustainer of all we do at Oak Arbor. Imagine the security young children feel when the school they attend backs up the messages they hear at home.

My colleagues and I work to integrate the Lord's Word throughout the various subjects we teach. We enjoy the freedom of allowing the most critical things in life—acknowledgment of the Lord's necessary presence in our lives, adherence to His Ten Commandments, the promises of conjugal love and eternal life—to be discussed openly in the classrooms.

How then do we translate these ideals into the daily lives of our students? Our school day begins with worship—a chance to focus on the timeless stories from the Lord's Word. The students actively participate in worship and learn by example how to give a worship service on their own. Through repetition, they gain confidence and comfort with the presence of regular worship in

their lives. A few days a week the children are asked to thank the Lord for some specific thing in their lives. This is a chance to verbally acknowledge the good things the Lord has provided for them.

Beyond the worship circle, we strive to help our students see things such as the wonder of the Lord's creation and His order in science and math classes and His divine providence in history. Through art and music they are given the opportunity to respond artistically to what they have learned about the Lord and His Word. In physical education classes we try to foster good teamwork and cooperation—skills necessary to the moral life.

Obviously, the Oak Arbor New Church School is a work in progress, and at times we fall short of our goals, but the opportunity to prayerfully join parents in the great use of educating their children for eternal happiness is a privilege and blessing. The support and encouragement that we in the school feel from the parents as well as the society at large is something we truly value. This beautiful new school building is certainly a testament to the congregation's support of our uses as we begin our twenty-third year of New Church education at the Oak Arbor New Church School. My prayer is that we may continue to touch the lives of children here, whether there be ten or one-hundred of them, and that we may continue to work closely with parents toward the goal of bringing an active acknowledgement of the Lord into their children's lives.